

NEWS

from

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FRANK CHIDES ROMNEY ADMINISTRATION OVER COMMUTER RAIL

Washington, DC-Congressman Barney Frank (D-MA) today released a letter to Douglas Foy of the Romney Administration chiding the governor's office over the lack of funding commitments for commuter rail to New Bedford and Fall River. Congressman Frank believes the people of southeastern Massachusetts have been waiting far too long for the rail project to be initiated, and that it is time for the Romney Administration to act. Although Mr. Foy had not responded to Mr. Frank's June 9th letter, Frank did speak to Foy last week by phone; however, Mr. Foy did not make any specific funding commitments for commuter rail in southeastern Massachusetts.

"What most troubles me is what appears to me to be the total failure of the Romney Administration to try to secure that funding," Frank writes in his letter to Douglas Foy.

Frank continues in his letter: "I have been working for as long as I have represented Fall River and New Bedford for transportation projects in Southeastern Massachusetts, and I have been able to secure some federal funding for a number of these projects. At no time in my recollection has the Romney Administration asked me to do anything to secure funding for Commuter Rail, either in the annual appropriations bills, or in the major highway bill which is pending now and has been pending for some time, given the Bush Administration's objection to spending an amount that even the Republicans in Congress think adequate."

The text of Congressman Frank's letter follows:

June 9, 2005

Mr. Douglas Foy
Office of the Governor
State House
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Dear Mr. Foy,

I am puzzled by your repeated references to the need to provide federal funding for the Governor to be able to carry out the pledges made by his three Republican predecessors to build a commuter rail line to Fall River and New Bedford. It is not my recollection that a federal component was a part of that pledge, but that is not the only thing that raises questions in my mind about your statements.

What most troubles me is what appears to me to be the total failure of the Romney Administration to try to secure that funding.

I have been working for as long as I have represented Fall River and New Bedford for transportation projects in Southeastern Massachusetts, and I have been able to secure some federal funding for a number of these projects. At no time in my recollection has the Romney Administration asked me to do anything to secure funding for Commuter Rail, either in the annual appropriations bills, or in the major highway bill which is pending now and has been pending for some time, given the Bush Administration's objection to spending an amount that even the Republicans in Congress think adequate. In fact, an hour after the deadline for Members of Congress to submit projects of interest to them on the last transportation bill that came before the House, my Chief of Staff was informed by State representatives with responsibility for federal funding that the State's priority for the bill was for Mr. McGovern and me to get funding for the Braga Bridge. By the way, we declined to do that because it was our understanding that the state was already committed to spending state funds on that, and we did not want to use our ability to get federal funding for other transportation projects in Southeastern Massachusetts to be obliterated by the state's desire to have the federal government take it off that particular financial hook.

In fact, at no time in my tenure has any representative of the Romney Administration specifically asked me to do anything to help get federal funding. I am of course able to initiate actions on my own, or in consultation with other state or local officials, but it is impossible for me to begin to seek funding for a project without the information that it is necessary for me to have from the officials who would be in charge of building it. And so the absence of any state effort here has made it impossible for me to take any action. I have instead focused virtually all of my efforts in the transportation area on other projects relevant to Southeastern Massachusetts, in part to compensate for the great disparity in spending that occurred when the state and federal governments together spent so much money on the Central Artery in Boston.

I write to you to seek information, however, because I realize that the fact that your administration has not asked me to do anything with regard to federal funding for Commuter Rail may not mean that nothing at all has been done. I have encountered difficulty in trying to discuss matters with the administration, particularly with the Governor, for example when I sought to pursue some cooperative efforts with regard to defending Massachusetts' law regarding oil spills, and to try to get the Coast Guard to take more of a role here. But the important issue here is not whether or not the Governor feels comfortable speaking with me, but whether or not the state is taking steps to follow through on your statement that you are seeking federal funding for Commuter Rail. So I write to ask whether there have been communications with any of my Congressional colleagues by the Romney Administration seeking to begin the process of getting federal funding for Commuter Rail. If there are, I would like to know about them so I can join with them. If there have not been such efforts, then I want to reiterate my view that it is an unfortunate practice to say that your administration cannot follow through on the commitment to build Commuter Rail without federal funding, and then fail to do anything in any serious way to achieve that funding.